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S E C R E T ABUJA 002988

SIPDIS

NOFORN

FROM AMBASSADOR JETER

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/01/2012 DERIVATIVE

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [ECON](#)

SUBJECT: NIGERIA: AMBASSADOR'S COMMENTS ON CIA 533007

CLASSIFIED BY AMBASSADOR. HOWARD F. JETER FOR REASONS 1.5  
(D)

REF: CIA 533007

1. (S/NF) I question the usefulness of reftel's content. If former Head of State Babangida made the remarks, his comments were almost certainly self-serving and perhaps consciously intended to undermine Obasanjo's status in Western capitals. President Obasanjo has his shortcomings and there is the unfortunate possibility that a serious misstep might occur that would result in Nigeria's use of military force in Bakassi. However, most indications are that Nigeria hopes to maintain the status quo, and avoid the use of force while engaging in bilateral discussion with Cameroon. Given Nigeria's position thus far, I sincerely doubt that Obasanjo would use "war" as a means to keep himself in power.

2. (S/NF) However, given the active political machinations afoot in Nigeria, intelligence sources sometimes need to be carefully scrutinized to determine their agendas. In this milieu, uncritical reporting of self-interested, biased statements of principal political actors will not always be useful reporting. Misinformation about political opponents will abound. Reftel may also be consistent with IBB's reputation for manipulative activity. We should be on guard for this.

3. (S/NF) I have come to know President Obasanjo fairly well. He has many weaknesses, and he has failed to meet expectations; however, I find it hard to believe that he has fallen as low as Babangida would have us believe.  
JETER